Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vietnamvetschapter1.org

FEBRUARY 2025

MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING
FEBRUARY 12, 2025

Approximately 17 persons attended, about half on Zoom and the other half in person.

A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors was held; no business was transacted.

The minutes of the December meeting were accepted as printed in the newsletter.

Lt. Joann Larson, squadron commander for the Rutland Composite Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol, describes the local youth program at the Feb. 12 meeting of Chapter 1. The chapter has donated $2,500 in support of the squadron.

Membership Chair Dick Doyle reported the chapter has 136 regular members, including new members Norman Flanders of Clarendon, Lonnie Leroux of Mendon and Anthony Marchand of Rutland. Louis Wierzbicki of Rutland submitted his paperwork at the meeting to join the chapter. Dick noted the passing of members Stuart Selikowicz of Waldoboro, Maine and Peter Mayhew of Whiting. Peter passed away just this Feb. 4.

Mike Murphy reported on efforts being made to provide a "home" chapter to VVA members whose chapters have disbanded or who may be otherwise listed as having no chapter affiliation. Mike is attempting to contact about 137 such "orphan" members. It's challenging because many have no email addresses. Chapter 1 sent out an email inviting these unaffiliated VVA members to join Chapter 1 or either of the other active Vermont chapters, in St. Albans and Bennington. Chapters in Essex Junction, Brattleboro, Montpelier, Bristol and Chester have disbanded. A couple of unaffiliated members have expressed interest in joining Chapter 1.

Chapter President Bill Ellwood has, for the time being, been heading up Chapter 1's AVVA (Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America) component. These include non-veterans interested in assisting the chapter's efforts. Chapter 1 allocated $1,000 to our AVVA group to carry out projects of their choosing. An initial project was assisting someone settling into new living quarters by providing a "starter kit" of household supplies. VFW Chapter 648 assisted the person with some furniture it had acquired.

The local unit of the Civil Air Patrol, known as the Rutland Composite Squadron, appeared at the invitation of Chapter 1 to describe their program and ask support for its current goals: a visit to the retired aircraft carrier USS Intrepid, with its museum, and the 911 Memorial in New York City; and equipment for its Honor Guard. Lt. Joann Larson appeared with five cadets, some of whom had assisted at a Chapter 1 Veterans Day service at the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Rutland and a Veterans Town Hall in the fall. The squadron has about 15 cadets.

CAP teaches leadership skills and provides military style activities to young people, who may enter from ages 12 to18. Members also take part in emergency response situations. CAP is a civilian affiliate of the U.S. Air Force. Participants who go on to join the military may be able to enter the service at a higher rank and pay grade.

After the departure of the CAP contingent, Larry Gold moved to donate $2,000 to the local squadron. Seconded by Tim Lonergan. Approved unanimously. This amount is in addition to $500 approved at the December meeting as a preliminary donation.

Following the CAP presentation, we heard from Heidi Lynch, executive director of the Vermont Farmers Food Center. Jack Crowther had invited the Food Center's Farmacy program to apply to Chapter 1 for financial support. As Heidi explained, the Farmacy program is one that provides fresh produce to area residents whose doctors recommend it for health reasons. Farmacy is a play on words in the sense that fresh produce is "prescribed" by a health provider in the manner of a pharmacy prescription.

Heidi reported that recipients of the program receive weekly boxes of food for 15 weeks during the growing season, beginning in June. Local farmers supply the produce and are paid, one of the program's goals being support of local agriculture. Food is supplemented with recipes, nutrition information, and cooking classes, so the program has a social element. Participation has grown from 75 recipients initially to 250. The program conducts fundraising each year.

A new Farmacy collaboration is with the Community Based Outpatient Clinic of the VA, which is right across West Street in Rutland from the Food Center. This year the VA will provide 20 Farmacy shares for veterans. Other community partners also support the program, while some participants share the $400 cost-per-participant. The program works with all the rural health clinics in the county, Heidi said.

Although Farmacy focuses on food delivery during the growing season, it continues year-round as off-season food, like winter squash, is available. Participants are not asked to supply financial information. Rutland's is one of the oldest Farmacy programs.

After Heidi completed her presentation, answered questions, and departed, Jack Crowther moved to donate $2,000 to the Farmacy program. Seconded by Dick Doyle. Passed unanimously.

Treasurer Richard Reed reported on the chapter's accounts, including income from the sale of break-open tickets from Tomasi's in Fair Haven. The report was approved unanimously.

The Chapter 1 meeting revisited the question of whether Ken Seward's name should be added to the Honor Roll at the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Eligibility for listing has always required that the serviceman or woman receive the Vietnam Service Medal or show other proof of service in the war and that the person entered the service from Rutland County. Ken went on to have a career in education in Richmond, Va. His situation, as explained by Mike Murphy, was that he grew up in Rutland but moved with his family to Springfield shortly before graduation from high school. Immediately after graduation he joined the Marines, entering the service from Windsor County, where he was then living.

There has been general support for adding Ken's name, in light of him clearly being "a Rutland County boy," but a few members felt the rule about entering the service from Rutland County needed to be strictly enforced. In commenting on the issue, Bill Ellwood said the chapter was not changing the rule for inclusion on the memorial but rather making a one-time exception.

Dick Doyle moved to add Ken Seward to the Honor Roll. Seconded by Jack Crowther. The motion passed unanimously, with one abstention.

The Chapter 1 Annual Meeting will be Wednesday, April 9. Jack Crowther acts as a Nominating Committee of one, normally putting forth a slate of four officers and five directors consisting of current office holders willing to continue serving and/or newcomers interested in stepping up. Anyone interested in serving as an officer or director is encouraged to contact an officer or director or email the chapter at vietnamvetschapter1@gmail.com.

The Region 1 conference of State Council presidents and directors from New England will be held June 14 in Rutland, with Chapter 1 as host. The conference will take place from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Chapter 1 is considering holding its 45th Anniversary celebration at the same time. It would take the form of a dinner banquet, with the regional representatives and a likely official from VVA national in attendance.

Bill Ellwood noted that the chapter will again help sponsor a Veterans Town Hall Nov. 7 in Rutland, as did last year.

The national VVA Convention will be held Aug. 5-9 in New Orleans. As the organization contemplates its eventual dissolution, this will be an important gathering. Dick Doyle is interested in attending, and Perry Melvin, a Chapter 1 member and Vermont's VVA State Council president, is expected to attend. The chapter is probably

entitled to 2 or 3 representatives, so anyone interested should notify Bill Ellwood through the email listed above of their interest. Preference will be given to officers and directors. The chapter will pick up the basic costs, which Dick estimated to be $1,695 per person.

Jack Crowther wrote a song about Chapter 1 and is interested feedback on its accuracy, quality, etc. It is posted on YouTube and can be accessed through this link:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRBy8DLyxvAvXza1zx2IjuA

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, Secretary

The next chapter meeting will be Wednesday, March 12, 4 p.m., upstairs at the VFW and by Zoom.

Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vietnamvetschapter1.org

MARCH 2025

MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING
MARCH 12, 2025

Approximately 20 persons attended, a handful on Zoom and the others in person. We were happy to welcome four transferring VVA members from the Chester chapter, including Ronald Farrar, Tom McLean, Edward Davidson, and Stanley Clark. The Chester chapter recently closed.

A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors was held; no business was transacted.

The minutes of the February meeting were accepted as printed in the newsletter.

Treasurer Richard Reed reported the total in our bank accounts.

Membership Chair Dick Doyle reported the chapter has 136 regular members. Dick and Mike Murphy reported 11 new memberships are in the works. Anticipating other transfers from the Chester chapter and Brattleboro, whose chapter also closed, Dick expects Chapter 1 membership may hit 150, likely an all time high. Bill Ellwood said Chapter 1 membership in AVVA (Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America, open to those not eligible for regular membership) is about 15.

Richard Gallo, a veterans outreach specialist under contract to the Vermont National Guard, often serves as a link between Chapter 1 and vets needing assistance. At this meeting he offered to maintain a list of volunteer drivers who might step forward to transport vets needing a lift to appointments or other places. There is a need, he said, not just for the transportation but sometimes as well for the social contact with another person. He's got a couple of volunteers already, he said. He noted that drivers are on their own liability insurance. Anyone interested can email Richard.d.gallo.ctr@mail.mil or call 802-338-4323.

Treasurer Richard Reed proposed filing the forms necessary for Chapter 1 to become a tax-exempt organization. Jack Crowther moved that be done. Seconded by Mike Murphy. Passed unanimously.

A Chapter 1 member came before the meeting to request financial assistance for heating fuel and electricity, describing the financial hardships he was facing, including a potential tax sale of his building. The electricity and fuel bills came to $1,141.06. The meeting took up the request later, after the person left the meeting. Some discussion revolved around the fact that the person had received help on previous occasions and granting further help would go against chapter guidelines. Our bylaws allow for exceptions. Ultimately, Richard Reed moved to provide $1,141.06 in assistance, the money to be paid to Green Mountain Power and the fuel dealer, in accord with the chapter's practice of paying the vender of the service, rather than the individual needing help. Seconded by Mike Murphy. The vote was 9 in favor and 2 opposed.

Ellie McGarry, executive director and co-founder of Companions in Wholeness, discussed the local organization in connection with a request for financial support. Companions operates out of the Rutland Methodist Church at 60 Strongs Ave. It has grown rapidly and will be moving to the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church on Lincoln Avenue. Companions offers free breakfasts and lunches Monday through Thursday and provides daytime shelter for homeless people as well as clothing, a food pantry and items such as tents. They provided 55,855 meals in 2024 to more than 1,700 people, along with 44,292 pantry items and 11,406 "essential items" for "surviving outdoors," according to Ellie. Companions provides the only "day shelter" in Rutland County, Ellie said. Opening at 6:30 a.m. on days they operate, the shelter takes in some people who have been up all night keeping warm and

come in to sleep in reclining chairs, she said. Other organizations like Rutland Mental Health and the state Department of Health come in to help the clientele. Companions operates on a budget of $492,000 and has a paid staff of five, mostly part-time. Volunteers are welcome. Funds are needed for operating expenses. A capital fund drive will be held to allow the move to the Immaculate Heart of Mary church.

Due to a full agenda, the chapter postponed any action on assistance until the April meeting.

The meeting next turned its attention to the June 14 Regional Conference of leaders from VVA State Councils in New England. It is now confirmed that Regional Director Justin Latini and VVA National President Jack McManus will attend and would speak at a banquet celebrating Chapter 1's 45th anniversary, if that were held.

The presence of the two VVA leaders — Latini and McManus — provided the nudge to go ahead with the anniversary banquet, which had been under discussion. Noel's catering, which operates the Franklin Center in the Howe Center in Rutland, has quoted us a price of $500 room rental, plus a choice of dinner menus at $35 per plate, plus taxes and gratuity. For 50 people, that would work out to $2,275. We have envisioned the banquet being free to Chapter 1 members plus one guest each, and invited guests, the cost to be paid by the chapter. Others wishing to attend would pay.

Richard Reed moved to appropriate up to $5,000 to cover the cost of the banquet. Seconded by Mike Murphy. Passed unanimously. Members are welcome to contribute ideas for the banquet.

Important: Please let us know if you are planning to attend and if you have a "plus-one" (no charge) or paid guests. This will help us estimate the expected turnout, which determines our down payment to Noel's. Please email Chapter 1 at vietnamvetschapter1@gmail.com or call Bill Ellwood at (407) 721 7992.

The VVA National Convention will be held Aug. 5 to 9 in New Orleans. Based on its size, Chapter 1 is entitled to send three representatives. Dick Doyle has expressed interest in attending. Bill Ellwood said he would like to see at least two attend from Chapter 1. Cost of roughly $3,000 would be paid by the chapter. Anyone interested should put their name forward. Preference will go to officers and board members. A registration form can be found on the VVA website, vva.org. Deadline for filing with national is July 7, but Chapter 1 will want to decide who's going, perhaps by our June 11 meeting. You can fill out the registration form and give it to Bill Ellwood.

The Dodge House, which provides transitional housing for homeless veterans, is back up and running after being closed for a time amid a shakeup in its staff and governance. Dick Doyle reported that Chapter 1 member Bruce Paquin is the president of the Dodge House board. The home currently has five men and two women residents in the divided quarters. Staff includes Executive Director John Tester and Assistant Director Kimberly Jarrait, who have been invited to the April meeting to speak. One or both will be present.

Rutland will again host a Vets Town Hall Friday, Nov. 7, in Rutland. Bill Ellwood said he would propose Chapter 1 again pay for a supper meal at the event, as we did last year.

Jack Crowther put forward the following resolution for action by the chapter:

"Chapter 1, Vietnam Veterans of America, declares its opposition to any wholesale cuts in staffing and services of the Department of Veterans Affairs. While we support reasonable efforts to improve efficiencies across government, savings must not come at the cost of hard-won improvements in programs for those who, as Abraham Lincoln said, 'have borne the battle,' often at a cost of life, limb, and peace of mind."

Tim Lonergan seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Following the meeting, Jack has circulated the resolution to Vermont media and Vermont's congressional delegation.

At the regular veterans luncheon March 11 at Denny's in Rutland the Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging handed out a flyer for 3SquaresVT, which assists folks with food purchases. The federal program "gives you, your family and fellow Veterans food at over 600 stores and 40 farmers markets in Vermont, and anywhere in the U.S. where EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) is accepted." No veteran is subject to the 3SquaresVT work requirement. Further information can be had at vermontfoodhelp.com. If you are 60 or older, you can call The Helpline at 1-800-642-5119, the Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging. I called the number to see if the program was affected by recent federal program cuts but could only leave a message.

Respectfully submitted,

Jack Crowther, Secretary

Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vietnamvetschapter1.org

APRIL 2025

MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING
APRIL 9, 2025

Approximately 16 persons attended, a handful on Zoom and the others in person.

A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors was held; no business was transacted.

The minutes of the March meeting were accepted as printed in the newsletter.

Treasurer Richard Reed reported the total in our bank accounts. The report was unanimously approved.

President Bill Ellwood previewed goals for the year ahead, noting plans for the banquet celebrating the chapter's 45th anniversary June 14, at the Franklin Center. To recap what is known so far:

> **Chapter 1 members are invited with one guess to attend for free. Event is likely to begin about 5 p.m. on June 14, following the Regional VVA Conference from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the VFW.**
>
> **MEMBERS (regular and associate): As soon as convenient, please let the chapter know if you and a guest plan to attend the June 14 banquet. Email us at vietnamvetschapter1@gmail.com. Lacking internet, you may call Secretary Jack Crowther at 802-775-1182 or mail Chapter 1 VVA, 15 Wales St., Rutland, VT 05701.**
>
> **ALSO, Members and associates who wish to attend the regional VVA meeting earlier the same day at the VFW from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., please notify the chapter through the same means as above.**
>
> **HEADCOUNTS ARE IMPORTANT FOR PLANNING!!**
>
> **<u>Note: Officers and board members are welcome to invite special guests to the banquet at no cost. Just let Bill Ellwood know</u>!**

Bill also laid out some potential activities for the year ahead, this being our Annual Meeting. These included a visit to the Vermont Vietnam Memorial at the Sharon Rest Area on Interstate 89 northbound and the Vermont Veterans Cemetery in Randolph. He also promoted the idea of a Chapter 1 group taking the Honor Flight. These trips, from Albany and Plattsburgh take veterans from the area for a day in Washington, D.C., to visit military monuments. The annual cookout for residents of the Vermont Veterans Home in Bennington is another event that could become a collective outing for the chapter. "We need to hear from you," Bill said, expressing the wish that members weigh in on their interest in these ideas or others.

Membership Chair Dick Doyle reported the chapter is up to 140 members, the latest being Louis Wierzbicki of Rutland. Dick is working on processing transfer forms for VVA members from other chapters wishing to join Chapter 1, several chapters in Vermont having closed. We could be gaining as many as 20 new members, he said.

On a motion by Jack Crowther, seconded by Dick Doyle, we agreed to spend up to $1,000 to mail copies of the upcoming Rutland Historical Society Quarterly featuring Chapter 1, written by Janelle Faignant, to all chapter members. We will also have about 50 more printed for new members and others interested. The Quarterly will eventually be available for sale at the Historical Society and online at their website, rutlandhistory.com.

Jack Crowther submitted the following slate of officers and board members to serve for the coming year: president, Bill Ellwood; vice president, Larry Gold; treasurer, Richard Reed; secretary, Jack Crowther; and board members, Dick

Doyle, Tim Lonergan, Mike Murphy, Carl Baldwin, and Dave Potter. Dave is a new member. There were no additional nominations. Richard Reed moved to elect the slate, seconded by Mike Murphy. The vote was unanimous.

Kimberley Jarrait, assistant director of the Dodge House, spoke as an invited guest to update the chapter on current operations. Dodge House provides transitional housing for homeless veterans. It is again operating after being closed for a time amid a shakeup in its staff and governance. Chapter 1 member Bruce Paquin is the president of the Dodge House board. Kimberly, herself an Air Force veteran, reviewed the history of the facility, which Chapter 1 has supported from the beginning and helped establish. It is named for Mike Dodge, an early Chapter 1 member who committed suicide.

Kimberly Jarrait, assistant director of the Dodge House for homeless veterans, spoke to our April meeting, which included Zoom participants shown in the background.

The home at 95 Crescent St. currently has five men and three women residents in the divided quarters. The staff also includes Executive Director John Tester. There are two full kitchens, a food pantry, and a library. Residents pay nothing. Supported by grants in the past, Dodge House has operated completely on donations for the past year. Sons of the American Legion is a main supporter. The staff works with residents to obtain employment and permanent housing. Applicants must be 30 days sober to be taken in, and a "zero tolerance" policy applies for substance abuse.

An ongoing need is drivers to transport the residents to appointments. Groceries run about $250-$300 per week. The Vermont Food Bank helps out.

Chapter 1 is receptive to aiding the Dodge House financially, and Kimberly will get back to us with a more specific request.

Tim Wigmore of the RISE Hanamaki Student Exchange spoke on behalf of the program, which he has been involved in since 2004. With him was Jonny Gydus a ninth grader in the Rutland City School system. The program features visits from the Rutland schools' 8th and ninth graders to Japan and vice versa, and has been ongoing for 35 years. Six children and two chaperones will take part this year. Self-confidence, and new perspectives are goals of the program, which Tim said have touched over 2,000 lives during its existence. The program sought financial support for its $25,000 goal, which is raised by various fundraisers.

Tim readily agreed to pursue a work project, possibly at Evergreen Cemetery, in return for a donation from the chapter. Following a discussion, we voted to contribute $2,000 to the group. The group will make a presentation to the chapter after their visit to Japan.`

Following up on a presentation at our March meeting by Companions in Wholeness, a food kitchen and shelter at the Methodist Church on Strongs Avenue in Rutland, Jack proposed a donation of $2,000 to help in their operations. Seconded by Bill Ellwood. Passed unanimously.

Richard Gallo, Vermont Veterans Outreach Specialist, under contract with the Vermont National Guard, was on hand to solicit participation in a program to transport vets to appointments and errands. A new development in the effort is that the program is now being run through the Marble Valley Transit District (locally known as The Bus). Volunteers are now able to receive reimbursement of 70 cents per mile, in addition to the rewards of interacting with vets who need the rides. Anyone interested in volunteering should contact Richard at richard.d.gallo.ctr@mail.mil or call his office at 802-338-4323.

On a motion by Bill Ellwood, seconded by Larry Gold, we unanimously approved up to $2,000 to send Dick Doyle to the National VVA convention in New Orleans Aug. 5 to 9. Chapter 1 is entitled to send up to three delegates, so others interested in representing the chapter should step forward. Preference will be given to officers and board members or others who have been active in our meetings. Anyone interested should contact Bill Ellwood at vietnamvetschapter1@gmail.com, and he'll provide an application.

There will be a wreath-laying ceremony May 2 at noon at the Vermont Veterans Cemetery in Randolph. The event, to take place at the flagpoles, commemorates the 50 years since U.S. troops were removed from Vietnam, and is a thank-you to those that served. Please let Perry Melvin, VVA Vermont State Council president, know if you plan to attend. His email is usmcdocvt@yahoo.com.

Respectfully submitted,

Jack Crowther, Secretary

The next chapter meeting will be Wednesday, May 7, at 4 p.m., downstairs at the VFW and by Zoom.

Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vietnamvetschapter1.org

MAY 2025

MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING
MAY 7, 2025

Approximately 22 persons attended, about eight on Zoom and the others in person. Great turnout!

A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors was held; no business was transacted.

The minutes of the April meeting were accepted as printed in the newsletter.

President Bill Ellwood noted the recent passing of the Rev. Pete Hults, our chaplain. "Pastor Pete," a career Navy corpsman and Vietnam veteran, died of cancer on April 27. The chapter approved a $100 contribution to Pete's church, the United Church of West Rutland

Military honors for the Rev. Pete Hults, chaplain of Chapter 1, were provided at the family plot of his wife, Jean (at left) on May 3 in Evergreen Cemetery in Rutland.The Revs. John Weatherhogg and Dr. Terrence O'Neill (at right) presided at "Pastor Pete's" services.

Vice President Larry Gold reported on an April 30 commemoration at the State House in Montpelier of the 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War. Four people represented the chapter. Following the ceremonial reading of a resolution, legislators applauded the veterans.

Mike Murphy, working on recruitment of VVA "orphan" members, i.e., those without a home chapter due to chapter closings, reported that 238 VVA members in Vermont fell into that category. They were contacted and offered the chance to transfer to either Chapter 1 or the Bennington or St. Albans chapters, the three remaining in Vermont. So far, 34 have filed paperwork to transfer to Chapter 1. Added to the chapter's approximately 130 current members, we should eventually have between 160 to 170 members, an all-time high.

Treasurer Richard Reed reported the total in our bank accounts. The report was unanimously approved.

Members of the chapter and members of the Rutland Historical Society have begun receiving mailed copies of the Historical Society spring Quarterly, featuring a story of Chapter 1, including history, interviews, current activities, future plans, and many pictures. The story was written by Janelle Faignant, who has become an AVVA member, and edited by Jack Crowther, Chapter 1 secretary.

Richard Gallo, a veterans outreach specialist who assists Vermont veterans with a variety of unmet needs, has offered to conduct a ceremony presenting Vietnam War Commemoration pins at our June 14 banquet to Vietnam era veterans who may not have already received them. (A number of chapter members received the pins in March of last year in a ceremony conducted by the Daughters of the American Revolution.) Anyone eligible, by virtue of having served in the military during the Vietnam War, who has yet to receive the pin should contact Richard at richard.d.gallo.ctr@mail.mil or call him at 802-338-4323. He is hoping to obtain some basic biographical information from you for the presentation ceremony.

Richard mentioned that his outreach program may end on June 28, certainly a loss for Chapter 1, which has relied on him many times for evaluating requests for assistance from veterans.

Brandon is holding a July 4 parade. Dave Currier, who drove his sports car in the Loyalty Day Parade with Chapter 1 signage, expressed interest in taking part. Anyone with a suitable vehicle or wishing to march should contact Bill Ellwood, via the chapter's email, vietvetschapter1@gmail.com. With sufficient interest we'll file an application to join the parade.

Jack Crowther moved and Tim Lonergan seconded a motion for the chapter to allocate $500 to pay for a supper at the Veterans Town Hall in November at the Godnick Center in Rutland. The chapter did this last year. At the Town Hall veterans are invited to relate their experiences in the service. The motion passed unanimously.

Richard Reed reminds members there will be a ceremony on Friday, May 30, the "traditional Memorial Day," starting at 3 pm at the Vermont Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Randolph. The official federal holiday is Monday, May 26.

John Pisanelli, a Chapter 1 member and commander of VFW Post 648, where Chapter 1 has its office, spoke briefly about requirements for joining the VFW, which include foreign military service of various kinds. Chapter 1 members who qualify are encouraged to join the VFW to show support for our "landlord." Application forms are available at the VFW.

President Bill Ellwood said we have 21 reservations so far for our June 14 Banquet at the Franklin Center. The banquet will begin about 5 p.m. at the Franklin Center and will follow the VVA Region 1 Conference at the VFW.

As giveaways for the banquet, we've approved expenditures for both a coffee mug with the Chapter 1 logo and a "challenge coin" with the chapter logo on one side and the VVA motto, "Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another," on the other side. The mugs, to be purchased locally, will cost about $800 for 150. The coins will cost about $775 for 200. Leftovers will be available for new members or special situations as warranted.

Reminder: We need to give our banquet host, Noel's catering, a headcount for the June 14 Banquet. Chapter 1 members and associate (AVVA) members are invited with one guest to attend for free. As soon as convenient, please let the chapter know if you and a guest plan to attend the June 14 banquet. Email us at vietnamvetschapter1@gmail.com. Lacking internet, you may call Secretary Jack Crowther at 802-775-1182 or mail Chapter 1 VVA, 15 Wales St., Rutland, VT 05701. Note: Officers and board members are welcome to invite special guests — in addition to their spouses or "plus ones" — to the banquet at no cost. Just let Bill Ellwood or Jack Crowther know!

We also need a head count for the Region 1 Conference, which runs from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. earlier in the day of June 14 at the VFW. The conference is being hosted by Chapter 1, with space graciously provided by VFW Post 648.

The Region 1 Conference is a regular gathering of VVA chapters in New England. The agenda will include discussion of resolutions to be brought before the VVA National Convention in August, as well as other issues facing the organization.

Members and associates who wish to attend the Region 1 Conference should notify the chapter through the same means as above.

Participants in the Chapter 1 Loyalty Day Parade May 4 in Rutland included, from left, Tim Lonergan, Mark Truhan, Norm Flanders, Dave Potter, Jack Crowther, Dave Currier, Andy Megrath, and Larry Gold. Bill Ellwood took the photo.

It was noted that two television stations have local offices. Jack Crowther will do some press publicity for the banquet. Jack plans to perform a song he wrote about Chapter 1 but is looking for some supporting singers/ musicians. Larry Gold plans to have some 1960s era music as background.

The chapter is still looking for members to join Dick Doyle in representing the chapter at the VVA National Convention Aug. 5 to 9 in New Orleans. It will be an important meeting in which the eventual dissolution of VVA will be considered. The chapter will pay the costs to attend.

VVA State President Perry Melvin, Bob Wheeler and Richard Reed laid a wreath at the Vermont Veterans Cemetery in Randolph May 2 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of removal of U.S. troops from Vietnam and to offer a thank-you to those who served.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, Secretary

The next chapter meeting will be Wednesday, June 11, at 4 p.m., downstairs at the VFW and by Zoom.

Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

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JUNE 2025

MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING, JUNE 11, 2025
REVISED REPORT ON VVA REGIONAL CONFERENCE JUNE 14
REPORT ON CHAPTER ANNIVERSARY BANQUET JUNE 14

Chapter 1 Meeting June 11

Approximately 23 persons attended, in person and by Zoom, including Michael Lalancette of Essex Junction, a new member. Stan Clark and Edward Davidson, formerly of the Chester chapter, which has closed, attended. Another great turnout!

A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors was held; no business was transacted.

Vice President Larry Gold presided in the absence of Bill Ellwood.

The minutes of the May meeting were accepted as printed in the newsletter.

Treasurer Richard Reed reported on the totals in Chapter 1 bank accounts. Richard filed the "long form" IRS tax return, 14 pages long. It is a requirement because of our level of income as a non-profit. His report was unanimously approved.

Dick Doyle and Mike Murphy, who have been recruiting new members, primarily from VVA chapters that have closed and "at large" members without a designated chapter, reported we have a total of 162 members, plus 11 incoming transfers that won't be officially on our rolls until August. This is an all-time high for Chapter 1. Dick noted there were 28 members in 1991. Thirty communities in Vermont have Chapter 1 members.

It was mentioned that the annual Vermont Veterans Home picnic will be held June 21, with VVA vets from around Vermont gathering at 10 a.m. at the home in Bennington to cook hotdogs and hamburgers for the residents. A VVA State Council meeting will follow at 1 p.m.

Jim Ficken, noting the balance in the chapter's bank accounts, suggested we might want to make a substantial donation to the Veterans Home. The June 21 picnic will be a chance to assess the needs of the home and how Chapter 1 might help.

Drawing on his experience tracking down the contact information for Chapter 1 members and potential transfers, Mike Murphy noted a number of vets, a few disabled, expressing appreciation for being contacted. We should be reaching out to these vets, Mike said. An Outreach Committee has been discussed for the chapter but is not yet in existence.

At the June 10 vets breakfast at Denny's in Rutland, Emily Lenilko, a VA social worker, made a presentation on the VA's Whole Health program. It's described as focused on "health and well-being," including "self-care and complementary therapies (such as acupuncture, massage, and yoga), along with your medical care."

"In Whole Health care, you are a more active partner with your health care team," according to a description of the program. Emily provided a handout listing a phone number for further info, 603-266-9317 as well as a website, www.va.gov/patientcenteredcare/.

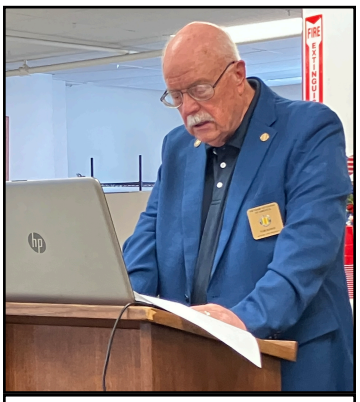
Respectively submitted,
Jack Crowther, Secretary

WE WILL TAKE THE MONTH OF JULY OFF AND MEET AGAIN WEDNESDAY, AUG. 13, DOWNSTAIRS AT THE VFW AT 4 P.M.

Region l 1 Conference June 14

This was a gathering of State Council and chapter leaders from New England, the first such conference in some time in Vermont.

Hosted by VFW Post 648, the event's guest list featured National VVA Vice President Tom Burke. National President Jack McManus had been slated to attend but was unable to come.



Tom Burke, VVA's national vice president, presents the plan for VVA's dissolution and its transition into the Vietnam Veterans of America Legacy Society. He spoke at the Region 1 Conference June 14 in Rutland.

The main event was a slide show presentation by Tom on the *Future Plan: VVA National, Chapters & State Councils*, which was issued by the VVA national Board of Directors Special Board Meeting in Arlington, Va., on April 23 of this year.

The plan amounts to a proposal to dissolve VVA on March 1, 2028, but lays out a path for a "successor organization" to continue the work of the national organization in veterans advocacy and support. Included also, are ways for local chapters, like Chapter 1, to a) continue as part of the national successor organization, b) become independent state-level organizations with ongoing "Vietnam Veterans of America" designations, or c) simply dissolve.

The plan has arisen from harsh realities: the average age of VVA members is now 78, and since 2022, 103 chapters and state councils have dissolved. "Our ability to sustain National governance is declining rapidly as we age," the plan states. "All our members want to ensure VVA's legacy remains relevant and vibrant, resonating with future generations of Americans," the plan says.

In 44 slides, the plan lays out a process and design that culminates on March 1, 2028, with the dissolution of VVA and the beginning of the Vietnam Veterans of America Legacy Society. The plan will be presented as a resolution at the National Convention in August in New Orleans, with final adoption proposed for the subsequent National Convention in 2027.

The VVA Legacy Society is proposed to be formed from the current AVVA (Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America) to carry on the work for veterans of the current VVA. Current members of VVA who choose would automatically be members of the VVA Legacy Society at no cost. A fundamental change would be that anyone could join, including new generations of veterans and non-veterans. The Society would be a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. The current national VVA organization would cease to exist.

The existing 542 VVA chapters and 46 state councils would have three options going forward: ~~1) Become part of the new VVA Legacy Society;~~ 2) Become independent non-profit organizations with a 501(c)(19) designation; or 3) Dissolve. "Ultimately, chapters and state councils will have to decide what to do," Burke said. Chapters that choose to go it alone will continue to have use of the VVA name and logo, he said. ~~Chapters choosing to become part of the VVA Legacy Society in 2028 could do so "without doing anything."~~

Following printing and distribution of this newsletter, Tom Burke helpfully provided the following correction: Option 1 is not to become a member of the society but "continue on as a 501(c)(19)."

As a 501(c)(19) (Option 1, as stated by Tom) the chapter would be an independent VVA corporation, registered as such with their secretary of state's office and able to use the Vietnam Veterans of America designation. The chapter would be permitted to carry out lobbying and political activity. Certain legal requirements would kick in after the national VVA organization dissolved.

Converting from its present 501(c)(19) to a 501(c)(3) (Option 2), the chapter would have to change its articles of incorporation and bylaws to conform its intent "to operate for 501(c)(3) purposes. The change would prohibit political activities and limit lobbying. Also required would be a "dissolution provision" requiring distribution of assets to another 501(c)(3) organization in the future. The chapter would also have to apply to the IRS for tax exemption.

Dissolving a chapter carries some requirements as well, including required notifications and distribution of assets.

"I want to assure you we have not not done this willy nilly," Burke said, as was evident from a host of slides that envisioned the differences between the VVA Legacy Society and the current VVA organization. The slides included considerations of staffing and functions of the organizations. Planning for the future grew out of a Special VVA Board Meeting in April of 2023 that called for development of a strategic plan for the future. "We put a lot of work into this," he said.

[Note: The plan remains an "internal document" until it is acted on at the convention, but members who are interested have access to it through their officers. I have a copy, which I'm glad to share. It's 44 pages.]

Downstream Effects of Agent Orange

Another significant topic discussed at the Region 1 Conference was VVA's frustrating but enduring work to get the Department of Veterans Affairs (the VA) to recognize the "downstream effects" of exposure to Agent Orange, the toxic defoliant widely used in Vietnam and known for causing a variety of harmful health issues.

Steve Schultze is a retired Marine who is the director of the Berkshire Veterans Outreach Center in Pittsfield, Mass. He talked about vets dealing with the VA in seeking compensation for health issues connected to their service. During that talk, Tom Burke provided an update on efforts to get recognition for the multi-generation effects of Agent Orange exposure.

Talking about genetic testing of vets, Tom stated, "The samples that they took from Vietnam veterans 50 years ago sat in an ice cooler . . . until three months ago."

"When the veteran comes back and they're retested they have genetically changed," he said. It has been an extremely long time coming, but they are finally coming around to the idea that veterans exposure can also be transmitted to the children. It is something that we continue on a national level to hit Congress with, to hit the secretary (of the VA) and to hit the president's office with that affirmation. We will not cease until we have the affirmation."

A VVA flier, "Toxic Exposure poisons veterans, their families, and generations to come" was handed out, noting that children with spina bifida or certain birth defects may be entitled to monetary benefits.

Chapter 1 45th Anniversary Banquet

Approximately 88 people attended the 45th Chapter 1 Anniversary Banquet held at the Franklin Center in Rutland and hosted by Noel's Catering later in the day June 14. Among the guests were about 44 Chapter 1 members. Reviews to date seem positive, i.e., people enjoyed themselves and the event.

Panoramic shot of the Chapter 1 45th Anniversary Banquet held June 14 at the Franklin Center in Rutland. Chapter 1 President Bill Ellwood is at right.

Chapter 1 Secretary Jack Crowther served as emcee.

Wally Pratt gave the invocation.

A Vacant Chair setup paid tribute to MIAs and POWs. Local musician Gus Bloch sang the Civil War era song "The Vacant Chair," which memorializes those lost in war.

Jack introduced Tom Burke, national VVA vice president, and Justin Latini. Latini is the VVA Region 1 director and coordinated the Region 1 Conference reported on above.

Bill Whiteman said grace, as guests lined up for the buffet. The meal featured baked haddock, penne with meatballs, and a cake featuring the Chapter 1 logo. Jack reviewed some Chapter 1 history, as people enjoyed the meal.

Jack had written a song about Chapter 1, which he sang, accompanying himself on the banjo. Carol Reed sang harmony and played guitar.

Chapter 1 President Bill Ellwood introduced special guests.

Achievement award and VVA logo medal presented to Chapter 1 members at Anniversary Banquet June 14.

Tom Burke, Justin Latini, and Chapter 1 President Bill Ellwood presented the VVA Achievement medal, the second highest award of the national VVA organization. It was given in recognition of Chapter 1's work, along with a square medal featuring the VVA logo. There are individual certificates to go with the awards. Some of the certificates caught up with the individual members, but not all. Chapter 1 will get the other certificates to members who didn't get them.

Chapter 1 President Bill Ellwood (left) and VVA national Vice President Tom Burke (right) present Chapter 1 member Joe Donaldson with the VVA Achievement Award

Also distributed at the banquet were Chapter 1 challenge coins with our logo on the front and the "First In . . . Last Out" slogan on the back, along with the VVA motto, "Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another." We also gave out coffee mugs with our logo to each member attending.

Tom Burke gave an abbreviated version of his morning talk on the plan for the transition of VVA to the VVA Legacy Society in 2028. Again, this will depend on action by the VVA National Convention in August and the VVA convention two years hence.

Also distributed at the banquet were commemorative pins authorized by the U.S. Department of Defense marking the 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. Awarded to veterans who served during the war, regardless of where they served, and to surviving spouses of deceased veterans, the pins remain available at Chapter 1 to those who may not have received them.

Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vietnamvetschapter1.org

AUGUST 2025

MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING AUG. 13, 2025

Delegates to the Vietnam Veterans of America 22nd biennial National Convention angrily rejected the leadership's plan for dissolution of the organization, according to Dick Doyle, who represented Chapter 1 at the Aug. 5-9 convention in New Orleans, La. Perry Melvin, State Council president for Vermont VVA chapters, who also attended, noted that the action at the convention placed VVA basically "at the starting point" for planning the group's future.

Chapter 1 had received a detailed look at the national VVA leadership's plan for the organization back in June, when then VVA Vice President Tom Burke presented it in Rutland at a conference of VVA leaders from the New England Region. The plan envisioned the dissolution of VVA on March 1, 2028, along with creation of a VVA Legacy Society to carry on VVA's work indefinitely. The new group would have allowed open membership to sustain its ranks as the Vietnam veterans died out. Local chapters would have been able to continue under a couple of different formats or dissolve. VVA members would have had automatic membership in the VVA Legacy Society.

Convention delegates, some 800 strong, would have none of it, Dick reported. An "absolute uproar" occurred upon introduction of the initial resolution for dissolving VVA on March 1, 2028, Dick said. The second resolution called for establishment of the VVA Legacy Society on that same date. "There was a lot of hostility, a lot of hostility," Dick said. After 2½ hours of debate, the deliberations paused. Discussion resumed later with discussion of six more resolutions related to the VVA future. It was then suggested that all eight resolutions be voted on at once. When the vote was taken, only three people voted in favor, Dick said, with, the remainder of the 800 delegates voting against.

"All gone, wiped out," said Dick, noting delegates had thereby rejected about three years of the organization's planning. Significantly, he noted, convention organizers had not even made a Power Point presentation of the plan, as had been done in Rutland two months earlier, but simply started with the resolutions.

Perry Melvin, expanding on Dick's remarks, noted part of the problem was the wording of the resolutions had changed and delegates "picked up on it." "They were angry about that," Perry said.

"Everybody knows that something has to be done, but that's not the something that's going to be done," Dick concluded. "That's wiped out." The issue is presumably postponed, in terms of action by the full membership, until the next convention, in 2027.

Dick noted the election of Tom Burke of Ohio as the new VVA president, replacing Jack McManus, known to be experiencing health issues. Also elected were John Riling III of Michigan, vice president; Bill Meeks Jr. of Texas, national secretary; and Dottie Barickman of Iowa, national treasurer. Among the 19 people elected to the National Board of Directors, was Justin Latini of Massachusetts, continuing as the New England regional director.

Part of the discussion going forward will be what happens to the $19 million in VVA's coffers, Dick said.

Dick also displayed the VVA national President's Award for Leadership, presented to Chapter 1 as the first chapter in the nation, founded in 1980 with Don Bodette serving as its first president. "First In, Last Out," a motto suggested by Treasurer Richard Reed, is engraved on the plaque.

Dick Doyle displays the VVA national President's Award for Leadership, presented at the recent National Convention in New Orleans.

Dick's report was a highlight of the regular Chapter 1 meeting, which covered a range of topics. About 20 members attended, 14 in person and 6 by Zoom. A new face was that of Mike Burke, who is planning to join the chapter.

In opening remarks, President Bill Ellwood mentioned the June barbecue sponsored by the VVA State Council at the Vermont Veterans Home in Bennington. Residents came outside and mingled with VVA volunteers who came to prepare the meal. Bill emphasized again his goal of involving membership in an increasing range of activities.

Some of the national VVA Achievement Awards (with individualized certificates), national medals sporting the VVA logo on a field of yellow, Chapter 1 challenge coins with the motto "First In, Last Out," and coffee mugs with the Chapter 1 logo were on hand for those who did not receive them at the June 14 banquet. These items remain available. Certificates for the Achievement Award will be mailed to those who didn't pick them up at the banquet or this meeting.

The original June minutes were corrected. Secretary Jack Crowther had corrected the minutes almost immediately in June and emailed them out. But those receiving the minutes through the Postal Service did not get the corrections. The corrections were not sent to those receiving the newsletter by surface mail. The corrections involved details of the VVA national organization's long-term plan for the future. Since that plan was just rejected at the VVA National Convention, the corrections are moot. In any case, the corrected newsletter can be found at our website, shown in the masthead above. The corrected minutes were unanimously approved.

Treasurer Richard Reed reported our accounts. Because of the level of chapter income, Richard has to file a tax return with the IRS. Consensus was he should be authorized to buy tax-filing software to ease the burden of filing next year. The report was unanimously approved.

Membership chair Dick Doyle reported 160 current members, with 18 more pending processing at national headquarters. The total of 178 represents an all-time high. Later in the meeting Dick noted that the national VVA organization has 93,000 members and is growing at a rate of 100 per month, with 200 new members offsetting about 100 members dying. AVVA (Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America) membership for the chapter stands at about 13, plus several non-participating members required by the rules for selling break-open tickets.

Mike Murphy briefly discussed his ideas for an outreach program to contact and visit any veteran in the immediate vicinity, or even broader area, that could benefit from having a personal connection to a Chapter 1 volunteer. Mike had circulated a fairly detailed list of suggestions for such a program, including a list of agencies and residential facilities that could identify veterans to visit. He noted that in working on the Chapter 1 membership lists he had made some 70 phonecalls and found 10-12 who were most appreciative of being contacted. Some were homebound and unable to go out. "You'd be amazed at how many of them have responded that, geez, I'm glad you called. I'm alive out here." Mike feels we should be seeking out veterans who may need something, ranging from money to moral support.

One concept Mike offered was for a small team to select a facility, such as a nursing home, and make visits to see what the needs of veteran residents might be. Another approach would be for the facilities to contact the outreach committee and request a visit to a particular person.

Dick Doyle noted that the average age of VVA members nationally is 78. A large number of those at the New Orleans convention were using scooters, wheelchairs, crutches and braces to get around.

Mike Murphy volunteered to head an Outreach Committee. He and Larry Gold already have contact with a couple of the residential facilities for older folks. Jack Crowther suggested setting up an email or phone number to establish a clearing house for requests for home visits. Chapter 1 members interested can put their names on a list to be called for visitations.

In the end, several members agreed to take part in an Outreach Committee, including Jack Crowther, Wally Pratt, Larry Gold, Dave Potter, Mike Burke, Bill Ellwood, and Stan Clark.

TO CHAPTER 1 MEMBERS INTERESTING IN TAKING PART IN THIS FLEDGLING OUTREACH PROGRAM, SIMPLY EMAIL VIETNAMVETSCHAPTER1@GMAIL.COM AND WRITE "VET VISITS" IN THE SUBJECT LINE. This will not commit you to a specific level of participation, but simply show a willingness to take part to a degree that meets your interests and existing commitments.

Turning to other business, Bill Ellwood shared with the meeting that Don Amorosi, a member from South Glens Falls whom we see occasionally, has been making a series of donations to the chapter. Thank you, Don!

Bill encouraged members who have not taken one of the Honor Flights to Washington, D.C., for a day of visits to veterans memorials, to take advantage of the no-cost program. Honor Flights operate out of several locations, including Albany and Plattsburgh, N.Y. Applications can be found online at honorflight.org.

Chapter 1 is also promoting participation in the Vets Town Hall program, including a Nov. 7 event in Rutland at the Godnick Center. Supper begins at 5:30 p.m. and requires an RSVP by the end of October. Veterans are invited to speak about what their service means to them. Non-veterans are encouraged to attend and listen. This event is free and non-political, and all perspectives are valued. There will be no debate on American foreign policy. Kyle Aines will emcee. Another Vets Town Hall will take place in Bristol on Sept. 25 at Holly Hall at 7 p.m.

Further information can be found at vtvetstownhall.org. Registration for the Rutland event starts in September.

Lauren Palmer of Brandon, shown here with Chapter 1 former president Andy Megrath, received this year's Stanford Technical Center scholarship sponsored by Chapter 1.

Lauren Palmer of Proctor High School is the winner of this year's $2,000 Stafford Technical Center Scholarship, which is provided by an endowment established by Chapter 1. Lauren is a student in Stafford's Public Safety and Criminal Justice program. Her goals are to gain an EMT (emergency medical technician) license, continue working at the Regional Ambulance Service and eventually become a paramedic. In her application, Lauren cited the values and lessons from her father, a 20-year Navy veteran.

John Pisanelli, commander of VFW Post 648 and a member of Chapter 1, reported briefly on discussions for a World War II memorial in Rutland. It has recently been noted that Rutland lacks such a memorial. Chapter 1 expects to support the effort to establish a World War II memorial, and John will keep us posted on the planning.

John also noted a planned repainting of the VFW building, expected to take place next spring. The cost for the complete job will be $8,500. Chapter 1 will likely contribute to the project and will have an opportunity to have its name on the building along with that of Post 648.

Back in January Chapter 1 donated $2,000 to the local Civil Air Patrol chapter, which had requested support for a trip to New York City to visit the museum aboard the retired aircraft carrier Intrepid and to take in the 9/11 Memorial & Museum. Help to equip the CAP Color Guard was also included in the request. The CAP chapter is officially called the Rutland Composite Squadron. CAP is a civilian affiliate of the U.S. Air Force. The local squadron has assisted Chapter 1 at functions like the 2024Veterans Day ceremony at the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial and 2024 Vets Town Hall.

At this meeting, Squadron Commander Joann Larson brought back several cadets to report on the trip to New York and to express their appreciation for the outing. Chapter 1 expects to continue its relation with the local squadron.

Richard Reed presented a request for support for a veteran's widow facing a $4,700 funeral bill, of which only $3,000 was covered by insurance. After brief discussion, Richard moved to cover the $1,700 difference between the bill and insurance. Seconded and unanimously approved. Richard reported the next day that the actual need for assistance had been reduced by $400.

Wally Pratt, a Chapter 1 member who is chaplain of VFW Post 648, was nominated and confirmed as chaplain for Chapter 1. The late Pete Hults had served in that post prior to his death on April 27. Later in the meeting, Wally reported that an electronic reader, a device for people with severe visual impairment, has been made available and will be donated where there is a need. A book is placed under the device and the page is enlarged and projected onto a screen. Anyone aware of someone who would benefit from having such a device can email Chapter 1 at vietnamvetschapter1@gmail.com.

There followed a brief discussion on collection and dispersal of medical equipment, not always as easy as it might sound. John Pisanelli described the overflow of donated medical equipment that VFW Post 648 has sometimes had to deal with: "We had more crutches down there than Lourdes, France," he quipped, referring to the Catholic pilgrimage site where people come, sometimes reporting miraculous healings at which crutches are discarded.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, Secretary

The next meeting will be Wednesday, Sept. 10, at 4 p.m. downstairs at VFW Post 648, 15 Wales St., Rutland. The Zoom link is

https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84111254472?pwd=SRmV5MWIblt8X76Ki7qQFhBmuORE2v.1

Meeting ID: 841 1125 4472
Passcode: 735468

Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vietnamvetschapter1.org

SEPTEMBER 2025

MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING SEPT. 10, 2025

I counted 32 people in attendance, 25 in person and 7 on Zoom, quite likely an all-time record! Not all were members, some just checking us out.

The minutes of the August meeting were approved as printed in the newsletter.

Treasurer Richard Reed reported the balance in our accounts and the net income from the sale of break-open tickets. Richard said he corrected the figure from the August report. The report was unanimously approved.

Richard purchased the Quicken accounting program for $99 to help with the required tax filings. We had approved him doing that in August. We approved unanimously authorization for Richard to roll over our certificate of deposit at Heritage Family Credit Union for whatever time period seems prudent. The CD has earned about $4,000 in interest since its purchase.

Larry Gold recently mailed certificates for the national VVA Achievement Award to those who did not receive them in June at our 45th Anniversary Banquet. We have a number of the Achievement Award medals left. If you were a member of Chapter 1 in late May or had applied for transfer and would like to receive one, we will give it to you in person or mail it while supplies last. You can contact the chapter at vietnamvetschapter1@gmail.com or drop us a note at Chapter 1, VVA, 15 Wales St., Rutland, VT 05701.

Mike Murphy reported on the newly established Outreach Committee, which he chairs. He counts six volunteers so far and hopes to increase that. The purpose of the committee is to contact veterans in senior living, hospitals or nursing homes who are unable to get out in society and would benefit from visits by Chapter 1 volunteers. Of nine area facilities he has contacted, four have responded.

Outreach activities so far include Dave Potter being in training with the Bayada hospice program, Larry Gold planning to work with The Meadows senior residential facility, Jack Crowther contacting the Rutland Center for Living and Rehabilitation, and Mike Burke partnering with The Maples. Stan Clark is already actively involved in outreach in the Springfield area and making about 12 visits per week. Chapter 1 Chaplain Wally Pratt reported on a recent visit to the Vermont Veterans Home in Bennington Aug. 18, where he visited 11 residents.

Mike noted that in Rutland, The Pines, Mountain View, and St. Joseph Kervick Residence do not have volunteers yet. Anyone interested in volunteering or learning more about this can email Mike at greenmntains@gmail.com.

In a closely related matter, David Trenor made a pitch for Bayada home health care organization's hospice volunteer program, serving much the same purpose as the Outreach Committee. Chapter 1 board member Dave Potter is already involved, as mentioned above. The Bayada program requires training and a background check. David, who is hospice volunteer coordinator for Bayada, is reachable at dtrenor@bayada.com and has an office at 190 S. Main St., Suite 2, in Rutland.

On a unanimous vote, we agreed to allocate $2,000 for a donation to Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sport, continuing support we have provided for the last few years. The non-profit provides a variety of sporting activities in programs targeted to veterans, including those with handicaps.

Bill Ellwood made a motion to donate $200 to the Rutland Historical Society. The money will be passed on as a donation to Archive.org, a non-profit database that stores, and makes available for free, historical records, including Chapter 1's complete archive of more than 900 files. The files are accessible through the local historical society's website, rutlandhistory.com. The motion was seconded by Larry Gold and approved unanimously.

We approved a $200 donation for the celebration of life for John Hall, a Marine Vietnam veteran who died recently. VFW Post 648, where Chapter 1 has its office, was to commemorate Hall on Sept. 12.

Chapter 1 has three more names for the Honor Roll at the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial. We decided to wait until a future date before printing a new plaque, in order to collect a few more names.

AVVA member Greg Washburn will contact the local Habitat for Humanity program to see if Chapter 1 might assist the group. Assisting with construction of wheelchair ramps was suggested as something Chapter 1 might help with.

Stan Clark from Perkinsville will explore establishment of a southeastern Vermont committee of Chapter 1 for new members from the former Brattleboro and Chester VVA chapters. There appear to be about 18 Chapter 1 members from that area.

Membership as reported by Mike Murphy stands at 162 or 163, with 19 or 20 transfers pending. That will bring membership up to over 180, easily the highest in Chapter 1's history. This reflects the somewhat paradoxical fact that even as Vietnam veterans are dying off, membership in the national organization continues growing.

At the monthly breakfast at Dennys in Rutland on Sept. 9, attended by about 20 vets, friends, and spouses, Scott Stone made a brief presentation on Project Healing Waters, a national program with over 8,500 participants in more than 40 states. At its website, projecthealingwaters.org, the group describes itself as a program that guides "veterans-in-need to recovery through fly fishing, mentoring, and friendship." There are chapters in Burlington and White River. The program teaches fly fishing, fly tying and even the building of fly rods. Scott Stone can be reached at scottstone@projecthealingwaters.org.

Bill Ellwood reminded members of the Vets Town Hall program Nov. 7 in Rutland at the Godnick Center. Supper paid for by Chapter 1 begins at 5:30 p.m. and requires an RSVP by the end of October. Register

here for the dinner: https://www.vtvetstownhall.org/event/rutland-vets-town-hall-2025/ The after-dinner portion begins at 6 p.m. Veterans are invited to speak about what their service means to them. Non-veterans are encouraged to attend and listen. This event is free and non-political, and all perspectives are valued. There will be no debate on American foreign policy. Kyle Aines will emcee.

Another Vets Town Hall will take place in Bristol on Sept. 25 at Holly Hall at 7 p.m. A Brattleboro Vets Town Hall will be held on Nov. 9 at 1 p.m. and includes a potluck meal. Learn more here: https://www.vtvetstownhall.org/event/brattleboro-vets-town-hall/ Further information can be found at vtvetstownhall.org. Registration for the Rutland event starts in September.

Jack Crowther will coordinate with John Pisanelli, commander of VFW Post 648, on adding a Chapter 1 sign to the VFW building when it is painted next spring.

Bill Ellwood asked members to think about paying half the membership fee of any new members of the Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America, which would be $50 toward a $100 lifetime membership. Since it is open to all, AVVA can serve to carry on the work of VVA when Chapter 1's members, who must have served during the Vietnam War, are gone.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, Secretary

Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vietnamvetschapter1.org

OCTOBER 2025

MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING OCT. 8, 2025

I counted 22 people in attendance, 20 in person and 4 on Zoom, another great turnout! New members attending included Abe Leber of Belmont, Doug Barrett of West Haven, Roy Godda of Rutland, and Ken Crews of Benson.

The minutes of the September meeting were approved as printed in the newsletter, with one correction, as follows: The group of members of Chapter 1 that have transferred from the now closed Chester chapter are to be designated a "committee" of Chapter 1.

Treasurer Richard Reed reported on the cash in all our bank accounts. The report was unanimously approved.

Vietnam Veterans of America
Chapter 1

Jack Crowther submitted the above graphic at the Chapter 1 meeting Oct. 8 as a possible design for a sign on the VFW building, to identify it as the home of Chapter 1, The building will be repainted in the spring, when the sign can be added.

Membership Chair Richard Doyle reported 180 regular members, including 18 new members from Vermont and out of state. This large influx is largely due to transfers from chapters that have closed and is thanks to outreach efforts to those newly "orphaned" members by Richard and Mike Murphy.

President Bill Ellwood reported 21 Chapter 1 Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America members, including a few Chapter 1 regular members who are also associate members. Bill proposed that for anyone willing to join AVVA, which is open to those not eligible for regular VVA membership, Chapter 1 would pay half the $100 lifetime membership fee, after the person had shown sincere interest by attending at least two meetings. Moved and seconded and approved without opposition. Chapter 1 has approved $2,000 for projects that its AVVA affiliate may undertake.

Mike Murphy reported that on a recent plane trip three TSA (Transportation Safety Administration) security people reacted to his Chapter 1 hat in a very friendly, affirmative way. "It impacted me the whole day," Mike said. Carl Baldwin said he had had the same TSA experience in Las Vegas, where he had gone for a reunion of the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing. The TSA agents thanked him for his service. "I had a number of our 366 members that said, 'Well, where's Chapter 1? And then that prompted conversation. And then they would talk about their chapters at home. They wish they did the things that we did. So we really have a premier chapter, and it's just great to hear those compliments from other veterans and other chapters."

Mike reported on the fledgling Outreach Committee, recently established as a vehicle for Chapter 1 members to visit veterans confined to health care and assisted living facilities. Mike has identified a dozen such locations in the Rutland area and was pleased to report that at least one Chapter 1 member has taken responsibility for visitations to each facility. In addition, Stan Clark from Perkinsville is actively involved in vet visits. Stan spent 32 hours of visits in September with vets in his area.

Despite this encouraging picture, Mike is hoping more members will step forward to participate. Nearly all the facilities contacted were enthusiastic about the chapter's program, which can involve anything from a phone

contact to personal visits. Further, the visits can uncover instances of personal financial need, which the chapter may be able to assist with. Anyone interested in volunteering who has not already stepped forward can email Mike at greenmountains@gmail.com, or call him at 703-856-3571.

Mike also mentioned that volunteers working with the Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association hospice program must attend a day-long training session. The next training will be Nov. 7 in Rutland. Also offered is a training session by the Bayada home health agency for volunteers in its hospice program. One chapter member is participating in that training already. Among the vets wishing to take advantage of the Chapter 1 visitation program are a half-dozen Chapter 1 members who are homebound.

Bill Ellwood will be speaking Nov. 20 at the annual meeting of the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Larry Gold reported that revisions of the Chapter 1 website are under way with Laurie Musick Wright, a graphic artist who created the existing website. The website is found at vietnamvetschapter1.org.

Bill Ellwood extended a thank-you to Chapter 1 member Don Amorosi for making monthly donations to the chapter. A resident of South Glens Falls, Don isn't able to attend meetings regularly, but keeps in touch. Bill also thanked member Thomas Siefring of West Virginia, who made a generous donation and encouraged the chapter to keep up the good work.

Bill again plugged the Vets Town Hall Nov. 7 at the Godnick Center in Rutland. A free supper paid for by Chapter 1 will begin at 5:30 p.m. but requires an RSVP by the end of October. Register here for the dinner or to present your experiences: https://www.vtvetstownhall.org/event/rutland-vets-town-hall-2025/ The after-dinner portion begins at 6 p.m. Veterans are invited to speak about what their service means to them. Non-veterans are encouraged to attend and listen. This event is free and non-political, and all perspectives are valued. There will be no debate on American foreign policy. Kyle Aines will emcee.

A Brattleboro Vets Town Hall will be held on Nov. 9 at 1 p.m. and includes a potluck meal. Learn more here: https://www.vtvetstownhall.org/event/brattleboro-vets-town-hall/ Other Vets Town Halls are planned for Nov. 2 at the State House in Montpelier at 1 p.m., in Bennington on Nov. 7 at 1 p.m at the Vermont Veterans Home, in Colchester Nov. 9 at 1 p.m. at the McCarthy Arts Center at St. Michael's College, in St. Johnsbury Nov. 9 at 1 p.m. at Catamount Arts, and on Nov. 14 at 6:30 p.m at the Charlotte Grange. Further information can be found at vtvetstownhall.org

Bill Ellwood made a pitch for developing a "financial strategy" for Chapter 1 donations, which have been going both to individuals with specific needs (help with a fuel bill, for example) and non-profit organizations. Estimating chapter income at roughly $50,000 a year, largely from break-open tickets sold at Tomasi's Tavern in Fair Haven, Bill said, "I would like to see a little more structure — the way we go about this." He noted that about half of the $50,000 goes for chapter expenses, including rent of our office from the VFW, mailings, events like the chapter's 45th anniversary banquet, and assisting the VFW with some of its building maintenance and improvements.

Bill advocated for more of a planned giving format, counting up seven recent recipients of chapter donations and suggesting regular donations of $2,500. He listed the Dodge House for homeless veterans, the Open Door Mission, Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports, the Rutland Civil Air Patrol Squadron, the Rutland Community Cupboard, the Vermont Farmers Food Center Farmacy program, and Companions in Wholeness (recently renamed Rutland Neighbors). He endorsed the Honor Flights program, providing trips for vets to visit Washington, D.C., war memorials, as a possible future recipient.

Bill also noted donations the chapter has been making to non-profits No One Left Behind, which assists Afghans who aided U.S. forces during the Afghan war, and Save the Children, assisting children in the world's trouble spots. Chapter 1 has been donating $500 a month to NOLB and $200 to STC since May of 2023. Bill noted that the $200 for Save the Children was in line with his $2,500 target for organizational donations but thought the $500 a month ($6,000 per year) for NOLB seemed high. Jack Crowther has investigated the two organizations, noting their four-star ratings by the Charity Navigator rating service. He advocated for continuing the NOLB donation "for now," observing that Afghans who helped our military were now at the mercy of the Taliban rulers of Afghanistan, who have wreaked vengeance on citizens who helped the U.S. In addition, aid to the two organizations occurs at a time when the U.S. has cut back foreign aid.

Jack made a pitch for the ad hoc, or item-by-item decision-making approach to donations as a way to stay in touch with the groups being assisted. "We make them come to us and tell us what they need it for. I'm inclined to say, not make it automatic. But do it year to year. It's not much to ask if a group wants $2,500. Come and tell us what your mission is and why you want the money. . . . I like the idea that they have to come and ask." Bill then responded there might be a blend of the two approaches.

Mark Truhan liked the idea of organizations having to come and ask for help but showed some skepticism about the non-local applicants like Save the Children and NOLB. Norm Flanders asked if Save the Children and NOLB ever sent notifications on how the money was spent. Jack receives mailings from both groups but admitted he tends not to read them. Dick Doyle thought the organizations were "worthy" but preferred the $2,500 level if donations were to continue to NOLB. He didn't think the chapter had enough "feedback" from NOLB. He asked if we had any idea of the money the group takes in from all its solicitations.

Treasurer Richard Reed recommended against voting on the issue right then, saying Bill's proposal was "a concept" that needs to be "built up and proven out." "It would not hurt to sit down and develop a plan for at least some of our giving," Richard said. "Every year we have a little bit more money in the bank. We're not rich." He also liked the idea of applicants coming in and presenting their case. Larry Gold suggested setting up an annual giving committee to "sit down on a regular basis" to screen donations.

Bill asked for a show of hands among those who favored groups coming in in person to request funds. A number of hands went up, but there was no formal count.

Mark Truhan said, "I think we need to give to entities that have helped us in Rutland, and the state. He advocated for prioritizing our giving as follows: Rutland, first; state of Vermont, second; "anything beyond our borders, not so much."

Jack said he didn't have a problem reducing the NOLB donation to $2,500 but volunteered to dig a little deeper into the group to learn more about its resources and operations. Richard came back to his point about not taking an immediate vote but feeling Chapter 1 could come up with a system for applicants to tell a story to justify their request.

Ken Crews pointed out that our donations should also serve as a way to generate positive publicity for the chapter.

The matter was tabled for the time being.

It was moved, seconded and approved without opposition to raise our donation to Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports to $2,500, from the $2,000 previously approved, to bring the donation up to what it was last year.

Bill proposed a $2,500 donation for the Dodge House for homeless veterans, noting that Chapter 1 member Bruce Paquin is president of the Dodge House board. Bill testified to financial stresses currently felt by the organization. A motion to approve the donation was approved, with the stipulation that a representative appear before the chapter to update us on its operations.

Norm Flanders of Clarendon invited members to a ceremony Nov. 11 at the Clarendon ball field on Route 7 B at 11 a.m. A donated flagpole will be dedicated, and Norm requested participation from his fellow veterans.

Bill proposed that the chapter donate a defibrillator to the VFW for response to a possible heart attack in the facility. The group consensus was to support the measure, which will cost in the neighborhood of $2,000. We may also contribute to training VFW staff to use the device. A vote will be taken when precise dollar amounts are available.

Richard Reed noted that a Chapter 1 grant to the RISE Hanamaki Student Exchange had gone more than 90 days without being claimed, even though he had written to the group to report approval of the money. The grant, for $2,000, was voted in April. Richard proposed setting a 90-day limit on acceptance of a Chapter 1 grant, after which time the grant would be canceled.

Bill Ellwood made another pitch for volunteers for a maintenance committee to maintain and improve the appearance of the Chapter 1 office. He has one volunteer already. Also needed is help to maintain the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Main Street Park.

We then discussed the possibility of our December meeting being a social event, rather than a business meeting. Subsequent to the meeting, Jack Crowther arranged with John Pisanelli, the VFW commander (and Chapter 1 member) for a social event with food on Wednesday, Dec. 10, from 4 to 7 p.m. at the VFW banquet room, free to members and spouses or plus-ones. Chapter 1 will reimburse the VFW for food provided. Food will be what may be described as "heavy hors d'oeuvres," i.e., less than a meal but more than cheese and crackers. Beverages will include punch, coffee and water. Members will need to RSVP by the end of November, stating if they and a plus-one will attend.

Jack has contacted a local musician for background music. Other features can be added, but those are the basics. You can RSVP by emailing the chapter at vietnamvetschapter1@gmail.com or calling or texting Jack at 802-558-4923. If you text, be sure to give your name and whether you'll be bringing a guest. This will be a purely social event, so no Zoom link. Richard Reed, tying in a suggestion to the earlier remarks about financial planning and support of non-profits, said we could invite our past and potential grant recipients to the event.

Larry Gold reported that the Vet Tix organization provides veterans with event tickets to veterans. Families of veterans killed in action are included. Details can be found at vettix.org, where you can register to participate. From their website: "Vet Tix secures tickets to sporting events, concerts, performing arts, educational and family activities across the nation. VetTixers sign up online. We verify their service. VetTixers request tickets to events that interest them, then pay a small delivery fee to receive their free tickets."

In a final note, Bill Ellwood spoke about the patches, hats and challenge coins that identify the chapter and the question of availability of additional ones beyond what a member is entitled to. It's been suggested that these items can be obtained for a donation of $10 each, if someone wants an extra one. That will be the policy going forward.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, Secretary

The next meeting will be a strictly social event Wednesday, Dec. 10, from 4 to 7 p.m. downstairs at VFW Post 648, 15 Wales St., Rutland. RSVP by the end of November to vietnamvetschapter1@gmail.com or call or text Jack Crowther at 802-558-4923. (If texting, be sure to give your name as I won't recognize your phone number.)

Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vietnamvetschapter1.org

DECEMBER 2025

About 30 members and guests attended the Chapter 1 social event Dec. 11 at the VFW. That was not a bad turnout, considering the gathering was postponed from the day before due to weather.

REPORT ON CHAPTER SOCIAL EVENT DEC. 11, 2025

Besides two kinds of meatballs, raw vegetable platter, cheese, desserts and other goodies, the two-hour gathering featured door prizes, free holiday sheet sets from the Vermont Country Store, and a couple of dozen teddy bears donated by Liz Grimes, a member of the VFW bar staff and owner of Tatum's Totes in Rutland.

As part of the event, a check for $2,000 was presented by Chapter 1 Vice President Larry Gold to VFW Post Commander John Pisanelli, also a Chapter 1 member, for a defibrillator for the post.

Lose a hat? A green hat with a Vietnam Service Medal embroidered on it, with a Vietnam map underneath, was left on a table. Let me know if it was yours and I'll get it to you.

In other news, I'm attaching the following link:

https://vva.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Strategy-Document-EDIT.pdf

It takes you a document from the VVA National website (and referenced in the latest VVA Veteran magazine article by the president). The article outlines steps that local chapters will need to take if and when the national organization ceases to exist. Two kinds of non-profit structures are offered to the chapters, one envisioning an ongoing veterans group with lobbying privileges, the other a more

traditional non-profit open to non-veterans and but restricted in terms of political activity. (Shutting down the chapter is another option.) Each choice requires some steps be taken to comply with the law. Chapter 1 members can review the document as a way of helping the chapter plan its future, though no immediate action is needed.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, Secretary

The next meeting will be Wednesday, Feb. 11, at 4 p.m. downstairs at VFW Post 648, 15 Wales St., Rutland. The Zoom link is:

https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85607130408?pwd=bajazc0XmkAdUKZVOXjHLombl6aCif.1

Meeting ID: 856 0713 0408

Passcode: 332737